

CHAPTER V

INTERMARRIAGE

AS WE have already seen, the first Portuguese settlers in Bahia were almost exclusively males and, like the Dutch under similar circumstances in South Africa and in Java, the English in India, and the English and Americans in Hawaii, took native women for wives. It is reported that when Thomé de Souza dropped anchor in Todos os Santos Bay, he found in and about the site on which the city was subsequently founded "more than forty" Portuguese men living with native women.¹ According to legend, De Souza was much indebted to the Indian spouse of one of these adventurers, "the comely Paraguassú," daughter of chief Itaparica of the local Tupinambás, for the eventual success of the settlement.

Paraguassú had been living with a Portuguese sailor, Diogo Alvares Correia, who, some years earlier, either was shipwrecked or had deserted ship at this point. He had since that time lived with the Indians on what is now known as Graça Hill, which lies within the present limits of the city, and had founded an extensive half-breed family. With the passing of time he has become a legendary figure to whom living descendants proudly trace their lineage. As given by Alvares do Amaral,² the legend appears more plausible than Southey's account³ and is as follows:

¹ Francisco A. de Varnhagen, Visconde de Porto Seguro, *História geral do Brasil* (3d complete ed., 4 vols.; São Paulo, n.d.), I, 300. Based on a *Carta* by Nobrega.

² *Resumo chronologico da Bahia* (Bahia, n.d.), p. 201.

³ Robert Southey, *History of Brazil* (3 vols.; London, 1810), I, 30-31.

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Diogo Alvares Correia, or Caramurú . . . was a native of Vianna do Minho, in Portugal. While still a young lad, overcome with the desire to see new lands, he shipped with a vessel bound for India. But the ship was buffeted by contrary winds and finally, lashed by a severe storm, was broken in pieces and cast upon the coast of Brazil at the mouth of the Rio Vermelho near a place called by the Indians *Mairaguiquity* and now known as *Mariquita*. This was in 1510. The shipwrecked sailors who escaped being eaten by fish served as choice morsels for men, for they were all made prisoners and subsequently devoured by the savage Tupinambás with the exception of Diogo Alvares Correia, who was saved by a young Indian girl, by name *Paraguassú*, the daughter of *Itaparica*, the chief of the tribe, who implored her father not to kill this man since she had at first sight become very fond of him; to which appeal the chief was attentive and presented her with Diogo, who then aided the Indians in recovering the spoils of the wreck among which were several kegs of powder and ball, and some muskets. Of the latter he prepared one and began to fire it, shooting down some birds. The flash of fire, the noise of the discharge, and the death of the birds caused great terror among the natives, for they had never before known firearms. Thenceforth they treated Diogo with great veneration, giving him their daughters for concubines, and the chief offering his daughter for a wife. Diogo was given the name of *Caramurú-Assú*, which in their idiom means "sea-dragon." He was also called "man-of-fire."⁴

In this savage state Diogo Alvares lived for some time, dwelling in a village later called *Villa Velha*, today the site of *Graça* until, some eight years later, in 1518, a French ship arrived in Bahia, and he decided to sail back in it by way of France to Portugal. When the ship, filled with a fresh cargo of Brazilwood, set sail again, he and the gentle *Paraguassú* were on it. Several of his Indian concubines, seeing him leave, swam out after the ship . . . , among them the charming

⁴ Antonio Alexandre Borges dos Reis (*Chorographia e historia do Brasil, especialmente do estado da Bahia* [Bahia, 1894], pp. 161-62) records a variant account of Caramurú's rescue: "Paraguassú, chancing upon him hiding in a pocket of a reef into which he had crawled to escape detection, and taking him under her protection, saved his life, he gaining afterwards, thanks to his qualities as a civilized man, the influence which he came so effectively to exercise."

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Moema, who, exhausted, perished in the billows of the sea. This unhappy Indian maiden is still today sung by the poets. . . .

On returning from Europe, Catherina Paraguassú, endowed with a beauty that was first among her people, performed the duty of a true heroine by receiving as her guest the first Governor-general, Thomé de Souza. She and her husband made the native Indians, without the least hesitancy, subject themselves to the Portuguese dominion. And it is from Diogo Alvares Caramurú and Catherina Paraguassú that the ancient and noble house of Garcia d'Avila, so celebrated for its wealth and civic services, is descended.

Subsequent to the arrival of Thomé de Souza, Diogo had been legally married to Paraguassú. And the church soon saw to it that most, if not all, of the similarly informal unions between European men and native Indian women were "regularized in Christian marriage."

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Although incoming Portuguese colonists and adventurers had readily entered into informal unions with native women, they appear at first to have hesitated before actual marriage. It was the Jesuits, we are told, who "managed to conquer in the early colonists the repugnance which they originally held toward marriages with Indian women." "Most of them [the Portuguese] here," wrote Padre Nobrega from Pernambuco in 1551, "have for a long time kept Indian women from whom they have had children; but to marry them was considered a scandalous thing (*grande infamia*). They are now marrying and assuming a proper life." "At any rate, inter-marriage eventually became a firmly established custom, sanctioned by both church and state.

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Although the scarcity of European women, so notable during the first century of colonization, had by the early

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⁵ Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala* (2d ed.; Rio, 1936), p. 302.

⁶ Padre Manoel de Nobrega, *Cartas do Brasil, 1549-1560* (Rio, 1886), quoted by Freyre, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

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000 situation by taking part in the life of the parties. This phenomenon
175 is not entirely new, except in that it affects men of dark color and
178 modest circumstances, for since the monarchical epoch numerous
* 563 métis bearers of nobiliary titles granted by the emperor had rep-
645 resented Bahia in the imperial parliament and occupied posts in the
646 national ministries. At least three ministers of foreign affairs,
chosen among the statesmen of Bahia during the Empire and the
Republic, were métis of great talent and of great social and politi-
cal prestige. One of the most brilliant federal deputies of the
republican regime established in 1889 was a dark mulatto, a
health-service engineer, a historian and linguist of renown.
Alluding to this intellectual, someone once said to a dark young
man: "You will never be president of the Republic, but you can
hope to acquire the fame of a Teodoro Sampaio." If one is to be-
lieve oral tradition, a member of the highest tribunal of justice
of Bahia, a métis of very high social and intellectual rank, as-
serted in a speech that Bahia has always had the lead in this tra-
dition "of liberty and equality among men who do not belong to
the same race or at times to the same religion."

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* 563 During the last election campaigns, the attitude of certain
666 candidates toward colored persons was exploited in favor of some
and to the detriment of others. Thus, rumors were circulated in 1945,
according to which a candidate for the presidency of the Republic
was supposed to harbor color prejudices and not allow the admis-
sion of Blacks and dark mulattoes into the military aviation
services, which he then directed. It is maintained that these ac-
cusations contributed to reducing the number of votes in favor of
this candidate in Bahia, in spite of the efforts that his party
made to lessen the bad impression that this revelation had pro-
duced, even among the Whites. On the occasion of the 1950
campaign, the followers of one of the candidates for the office
of governor of the State distributed a tract in which a newspaper
favorable to another candidate was accused of having published
an article whose author maintained that Negresses made them-
selves /54/ ridiculous by aping white women. In both cases it
was an attempt to cause difficulties between candidates and voters.
Moreover, a national association of colored men recommended to